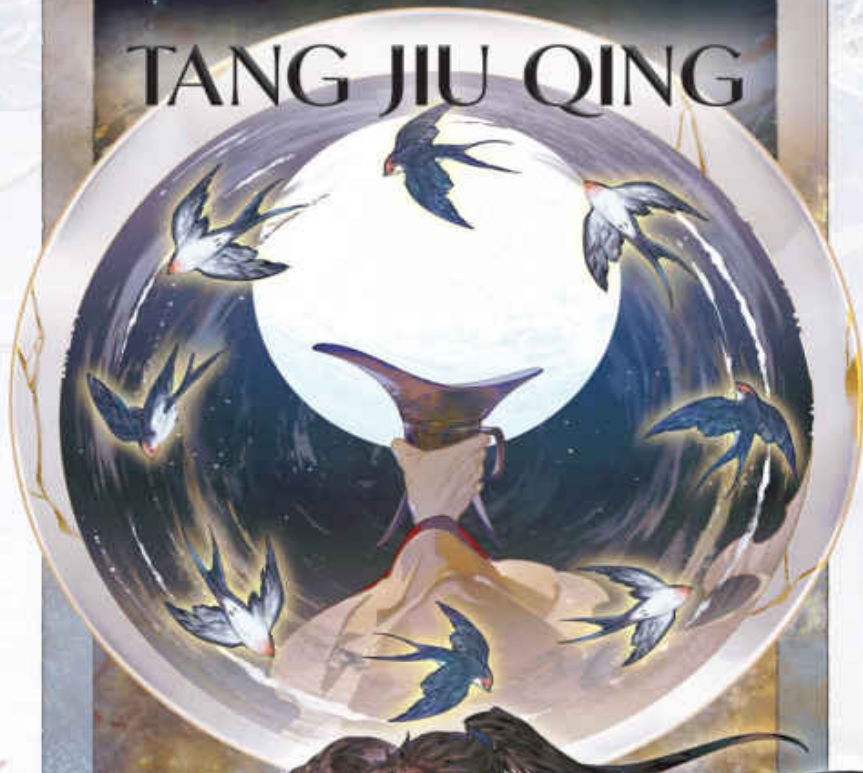


TANG JIU QING



BALLAD
of SWORD
& WINE 3
QIANG JIN JIU

Table of Contents

[Color Gallery](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyrights and Credits](#)

[Table of Contents Page](#)

[Chapter 76: Casting the Net](#)

[Chapter 77: Dispute](#)

[Chapter 78: Individual Servings](#)

[Chapter 79: Clues](#)

[Chapter 80: Bride Price](#)

[Chapter 81: Shadows](#)

[Chapter 82: Debt Collection](#)

[Chapter 83: Scenery of Spring](#)

[Chapter 84: Wealth](#)

[Chapter 85: Assignment](#)

[Chapter 86: Old Manor](#)

[Chapter 87: Imperial Heir](#)

[Chapter 88: Imperial Preceptor](#)

[Chapter 89: Cracks and Booms](#)

[Chapter 90: Veteran General](#)

[Chapter 91: Libei](#)

[Chapter 92: Anxiety](#)

[Chapter 93: General](#)

[Chapter 94: Raging Waves](#)

[Chapter 95: The State](#)

[Chapter 96: The Fall](#)


[Chapter 97: In Pain](#)

[Chapter 98: On the Run](#)

[Chapter 99: Thank-You Gift](#)

[Chapter 100: Latent Threat](#)

[**Chapter 101: Treasure**](#)
[**Chapter 102: Cizhou**](#)
[**Chapter 103: Beauty**](#)
[**Chapter 104: Elder Brother**](#)
[**Chapter 105: Cunning**](#)
[**Chapter 106: Crude**](#)
[**Chapter 107: Odd**](#)
[**Chapter 108: Silver**](#)
[**Chapter 109: Jingzhe**](#)
[**Chapter 110: Son of a Concubine**](#)
[**Chapter 111: Mother**](#)
[**Chapter 112: Chasing the Stars**](#)
[**The Story Continues**](#)
[**Appendix: Characters & Institutions**](#)
[**Glossary**](#)
[**About the Author**](#)
[**Footnotes**](#)
[**Back Cover**](#)
[**Newsletter**](#)



BALLAD
of SWORD
& WINE
QIANG JIN JIU

3







BALLAD
of SWORD
& WINE
QIANG JIN JIU

3



WRITTEN BY

Tang Jiu Qing

ILLUSTRATED BY

St

TRANSLATED BY

XiA, Jia, amixy



Seven Seas Entertainment

Ballad of Sword and Wine: Qiang Jin Jiu (Novel) Vol. 3

Published originally under the title of 《将进酒》 (Qiang Jin Jiu)

Author©唐酒卿(Tang Jiu Qing)

English edition rights under license granted by 北京晋江原创网络科技有限公司
(Beijing Jinjiang Original Network Technology Co., Ltd.)

English edition copyright © 2025 Seven Seas Entertainment, LLC

Arranged through JS Agency Co., Ltd

All rights reserved

Cover & Interior Illustrations: St

No portion of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form without written permission from the copyright holders. This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental. Any information or opinions expressed by the creators of this book belong to those individual creators and do not necessarily reflect the views of Seven Seas Entertainment or its employees.

Seven Seas press and purchase enquiries can be sent to Marketing Manager Lauren Hill at press@gomanga.com. Information regarding the distribution and purchase of digital editions is available from Digital Manager CK Russell at digital@gomanga.com.

Seven Seas and the Seven Seas logo are trademarks of Seven Seas Entertainment. All rights reserved.

Follow Seven Seas Entertainment online at sevenseasentertainment.com.

TRANSLATION: XiA, Jia, amixy

ADAPTATION: Dara

COVER & MAP DESIGN: M. A. Lewife

INTERIOR DESIGN: Clay Gardner

INTERIOR LAYOUT: Karis Page

COPY EDITOR: Jehanne Bell

PROOFREADER: Kate Kishi, Hnä

EDITOR: Kelly Quinn Chiu

PREPRESS TECHNICIAN: Salvador Chan Jr., April Malig, Jules Valera

MANAGING EDITOR: Alyssa Scavetta

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Julie Davis

PUBLISHER: Lianne Sentar

VICE PRESIDENT: Adam Arnold

PRESIDENT: Jason DeAngelis

ISBN: 979-8-88843-312-6

Printed in Canada

First Printing: January 2025

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

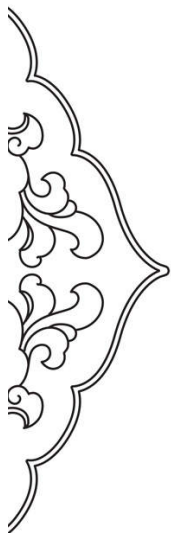


TABLE OF CONTENTS



- 76 Casting the Net
- 77 Dispute
- 78 Individual Servings
- 79 Clues
- 80 Bride Price
- 81 Shadows
- 82 Debt Collection
- 83 Scenery of Spring
- 84 Wealth
- 85 Assignment
- 86 Old Manor
- 87 Imperial Heir
- 88 Imperial Preceptor
- 89 Cracks and Booms
- 90 Veteran General
- 91 Libei
- 92 Anxiety
- 93 General
- 94 Raging Waves
- 95 The State
- 96 The Fall





- 97** In Pain
- 98** On the Run
- 99** Thank-You Gift
- 100** Latent Threat
- 101** Treasure
- 102** Cizhou
- 103** Beauty
- 104** Elder Brother
- 105** Cunning
- 106** Crude
- 107** Odd
- 108** Silver
- 109** Jingzhe
- 110** Son of a Concubine
- 111** Mother
- 112** Chasing the Stars

APPENDIXES

- Character & Name Guide
- Glossary

Chapter 76: Casting the Net

THE LAST OF THE NIGHT rain was fading, but the humidity of their bodies lingered in the bedding.

The little cottage by the hot springs on Mount Feng had been newly renovated; although it was small, it contained all the necessities. Xiao Chiye, robe draped over his shoulders, got up and fed the horse and gyrfalcon. The only sounds on Mount Feng at daybreak were the soft *plinks* of water dripping from the eaves. He basked in the mountain breeze for a moment, his robe casually open, until the chill of early spring calmed the sharp edge of excitement that had persisted through the night. He had sobered from the wine, but his passion had grown more intense and vicious, followed by the kind of languid tenderness that came only after being sated.

This was the pleasure of indulging in desire.

Xiao Chiye removed the saddle on Snowcrest's back and gestured to Meng, who spread his wings and flew out of the eaves into the forest.

When Xiao Chiye ducked back inside, the close heat of the place hadn't yet dissipated. Shen Zechuan lay face-down on the pillow with the blanket drawn over him, making it impossible to tell if he was asleep or awake. Dangling from his half-exposed right ear was that jade earring. Xiao Chiye took it off for him and, in passing, rubbed his earlobe where it had turned red from the pressure of the clasp.

Shen Zechuan moaned. He hadn't yet sunk into a sound sleep, and after another moment of stillness, he opened his eyes to look at Xiao Chiye.

"We should go," he rasped.

Xiao Chiye lay down beside Shen Zechuan and met his eyes. "It's a day off today. It's still early."

Shen Zechuan hummed. "There's still work to be done in the Imperial Prison."

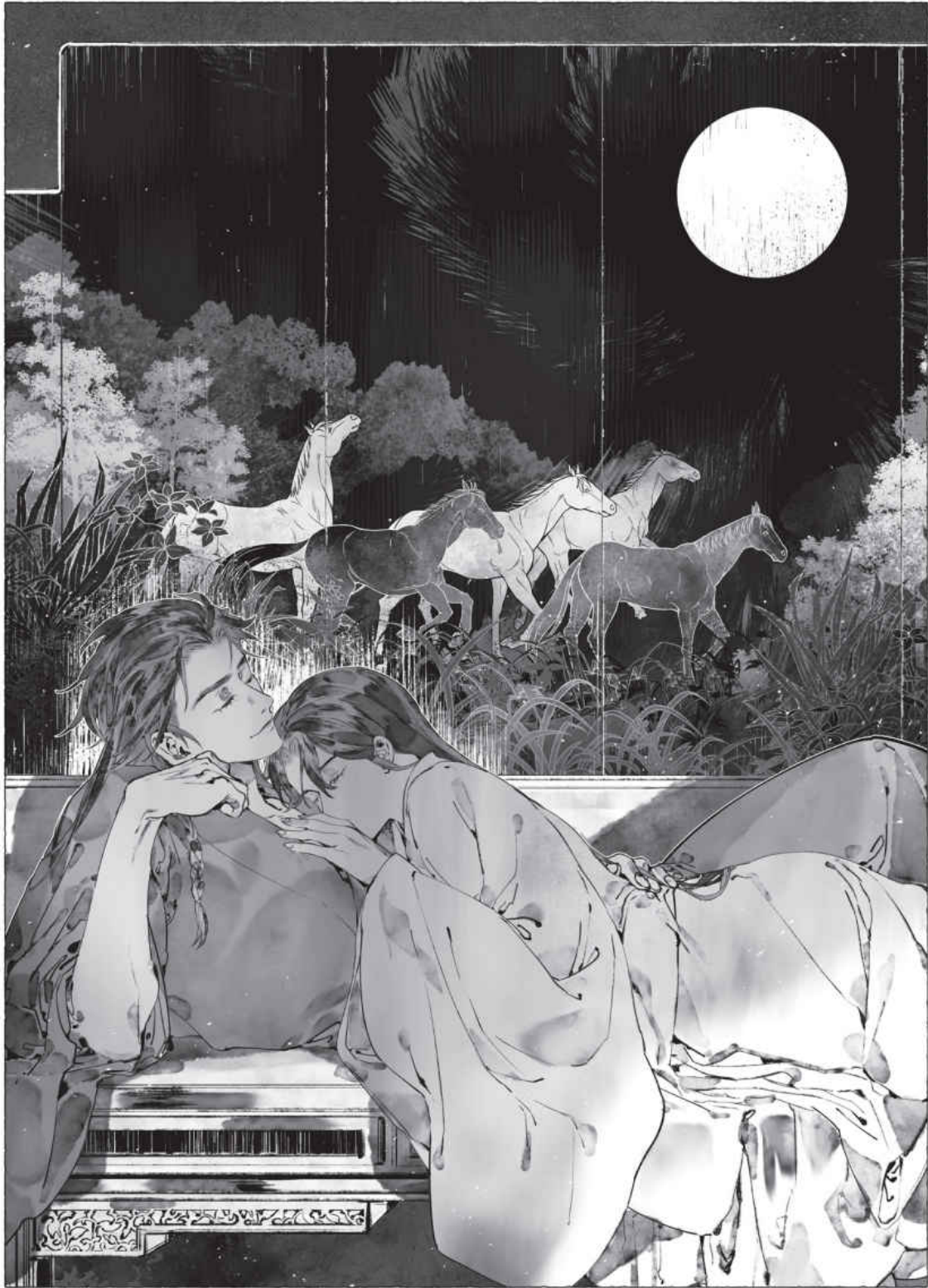
"Such a busy man." Xiao Chiye laced their fingers together and pulled Shen Zechuan closer. "In just one day, you rose to the position of northern judge, and then to vice commander. Those you'll be facing now are noble descendants with hereditary ranks. They won't be easy to manage; someone is bound to try to trip you up with some underhanded trick."

"Serving at the emperor's side is never easy," Shen Zechuan said.

It was in this way Shen Zechuan lay: expression open, body soft and satiated. They locked eyes, then, like the gentle breeze after a rainstorm, came their kiss, light and slow. They had earnestly bared their hearts to each other in this humble thatched cottage, as if in these few scant hours away from Qudu they could cast aside the strategy and prudence politics demanded and become no more than two young men.

"This place is too small," Xiao Chiye whispered. "The view of the sky is blocked by vermilion walls, and the mountains and plains are hemmed in by cities—Snowcrest can't run to his heart's content. Someday, when we return to Libei, I'll take you riding through the Hongyan Mountains."

Shen Zechuan rested his head against Xiao Chiye's chest. "Is the moon in Libei as round as the moon in Duanzhou?"



Xiao Chiye answered only after a long pause. "I've already forgotten. Is the grass in Duanzhou as tall as the grass in Libei?"

"I've already forgotten."

They burst into laughter, dispelling that cloud of melancholy. Shen Zechuan breathed in Xiao Chiye's scent as Xiao Chiye pressed his chin against the top of Shen Zechuan's head.

"Let's go together," Xiao Chiye said.

"Home?"

Xiao Chiye tightened his arms around Shen Zechuan. "Home. Let's ask Ji Gang-shifu to come with us. Libei is vast; there's plenty of space for him."

Shen Zechuan laughed and lowered his lashes. "Shifu wants to return to Duanzhou. I'm afraid we won't be able to go together."

Xiao Chiye looked down at him. "As long as we can get out of Qudu, we'll go together, even to the ends of the earth."

"The wolf pup should be in Libei." Shen Zechuan found Xiao Chiye's eyes again. "It would be a pity if the poor thing grew complacent with a life of leisure."

"Libei has my eldest brother, and the Libei Armored Cavalry has my father," Xiao Chiye answered evenly. "Riding is the only thing that suits me."

Shen Zechuan lifted Xiao Chiye's chin and looked into his eyes. "Talents bestowed by the heavens will find their use; it's only a matter of

time. Ce'an, Ce'an—all the hopes of Libei lie in this name.”

Xiao Chiye let out a booming laugh and rolled over to pin Shen Zechuan to the bed. He pressed his forehead against Shen Zechuan's. “Do you want me or not?”

After a lazy stretch to ease his aching muscles, Shen Zechuan squeezed the back of Xiao Chiye's neck and answered huskily, “Will you give yourself to me or not?”

Xiao Chiye dipped his head to kiss him and pulled the blanket up over them both.

After that rainy night, the days grew warmer in Qudu.

The Grand Secretariat demanded Pan Xiangjie's dismissal from his position as Minister of Works, and the Chief Surveillance Bureau submitted more than ten memorials in a row impeaching him. The daily arguments in the imperial court grew so heated Li Jianheng's ears ached. Wei Huaigu, the Minister of Revenue, and other high-ranking ministers from the other noble clans stuck together; they wouldn't abandon one of their own at the first hurdle. In the end, even minor officials like Fu Linye were only demoted with a reduced salary, and were allowed to remain in the capital.

After the fall of Hua Siqian during the coup at the Nanlin Hunting Grounds, Hai Liangyi had assumed the position of the Grand Secretary of the Grand Secretariat. Although he entrusted Xue Xiuzhuo, a man from the Eight Great Clans, with heavy responsibilities, he had also promoted several low-ranking officials from common households one after another—most conspicuously the current Minister of Justice, Kong Qiu. The two sides

fought a bitter war against each other, both before the court and in the shadows.

However, this recent case was a matter of grave importance. Someone had to take responsibility for the clogged ditches: the noble clans couldn't push the blame onto a scapegoat this time. If Pan Xiangjie wasn't impeached, then Wei Huaigu would have to go.

The Ministry of Revenue was obviously of greater importance to the noble clans than the Ministry of Works—the manual laborers could be cast aside, but control of the treasury must be retained. To this end, Pan Xiangjie wasn't the only member of the Pan Clan on the chopping board. His eldest son of lawful birth, the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Revenue, was also set to be suspended from his post to await impeachment.

Li Jianheng no longer spoke his mind so readily before the court. After adjourning for the day, he called for Xiao Chiye to stay behind. They took a stroll around the garden to take in the spring views.

“I heard you rode out of the capital in the middle of a thunderstorm some days ago.” Li Jianheng held back the sleeve of his bright yellow imperial day robe as he offered half of his candied fruits to Xiao Chiye. “What were you up to?”

“The Imperial Army's drill grounds are close to Mount Feng. I worry whenever it rains; it's been only a few days since the flooding in the public ditches. I rushed over that night to take a look,” Xiao Chiye replied breezily, as if he hadn't registered that Li Jianheng was keeping tabs on him. He smiled. “Your Majesty knows all about that military drill ground. It cost the Imperial Army an arm and a leg. If the rain were to damage it, those twenty thousand men of mine would have to go squeeze in with the Eight Great Battalions.”

“If you marched the Imperial Army to the Eight Great Battalions’ military grounds tomorrow, the Ministry of Revenue would allocate the funds for your drill grounds’ repair immediately.” Li Jianheng tossed the candied fruit into his mouth. “They have their guards up around you—I’ve noticed that much by now. They would rather keep you as far away as possible.”

“We’re all merely doing our duty. Where do they get such outlandish ideas?” Xiao Chiye said self-deprecatingly.

Recalling the last time Xiao Chiye was besieged and attacked on all sides in court, Li Jianheng promptly answered, “They’re full of foul notions, and sly as old foxes. Every one of them speaks with such eloquence, but in truth, their words are traps meant to set others up. Never mind you, they even had the gall to pull one over on *us*. Take Pan Xiangjie: his dereliction of duty almost led to our death. And look—who should enter the palace last night to keep the empress dowager company but Commandery Princess Zhaoyue? The empress dowager knew better, of course; she said she wouldn’t interfere in state affairs and sent the princess away. Now, how would a girl who’s about to be wed know the ins and outs of these political matters? No doubt the Helian Marquis put her up to it. The two families are in-laws, after all!”

Xiao Chiye followed Li Jianheng down the steps and beneath the fresh green buds of the branches. “Has Your Majesty made up your mind to punish Pan Xiangjie then?”

“Of course. We mustn’t let him off easily,” Li Jianheng said. “Cen Yu submitted a memorial just a few days ago with a drawing of the disaster victims from the low-lying district; it’s devastating. We are the emperor; we’re confined within the imperial palace. It’s just as the secretariat elder said: all our information comes through others. But that drawing—Pan

Xiangjie's negligence and tardiness in clearing up the public ditches led to untold suffering. He must be punished. The secretariat elder thinks so too."

Having tasted the sweetness of dishing out rewards and receiving praise from the grandmasters of remonstrance within the Chief Surveillance Bureau, Li Jianheng next wanted to make an example of Pan Xiangjie.

"I happen to disagree with the secretariat elder," Xiao Chiye said unexpectedly. "Pan Xiangjie deserves punishment, yes, but he shouldn't be so peremptorily removed from office."

Li Jianheng frowned back at him. "After such a blunder, you propose we keep him around so he may make another?"

Xiao Chiye cast a glance at the clear skies overhead. Remembering what Shen Zechuan had said about how blame would be laid at Pan Xiangjie's feet, he laughed. "Of course Your Majesty must punish him. But if you dismiss him from his post, it'll be the end of his career. Pan Xiangjie is advanced in age. He's made some worthy contributions in his position as Minister of Works over the years. Your Majesty, the blockage of the public ditches caused sewage to flood the streets and destroy buildings, but the embankments of the Kailing River remained as solid and secure as an iron wall. In previous years, when other regions have flooded, very few dams and embankments have held up so well. The minister clearly put some effort into the construction and didn't cut corners."

"But his negligence of the public ditches is a fact as well. Why should we let him off easy just because of the Kailing River?"

"Your Majesty," Xiao Chiye said. "The court assembly this morning discussed the allocation of funds for the spring plowing. The Ministry of